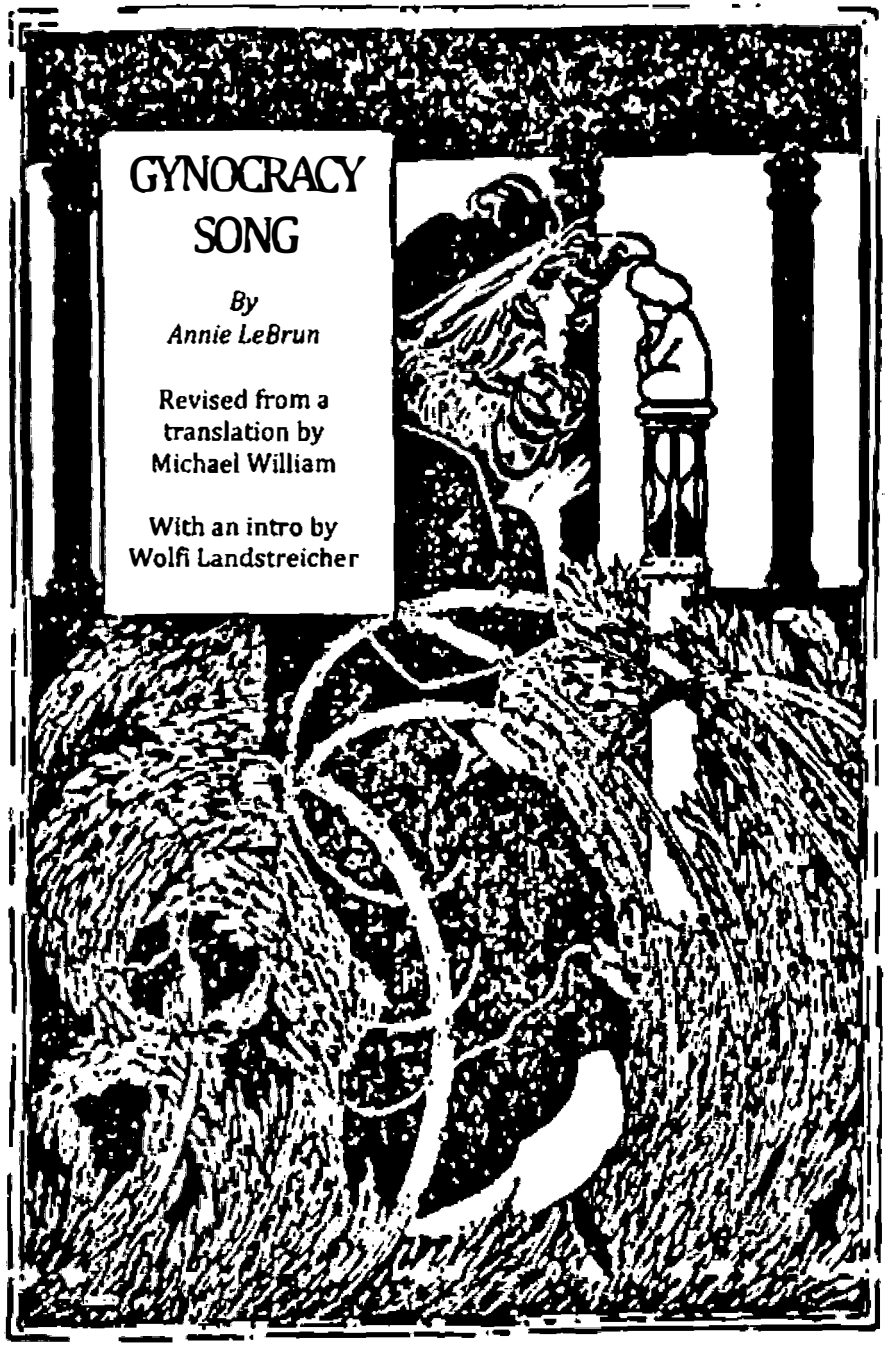
ANNIE LEBRUN

This surrealist rebel and participant in the 1968 uprising in France explains why feminism as we know it is inadequate to women and people in general.



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memory beyond their silent childhood, which carries of the wake of mirrors toward the high sea of their love. Having come back with the day, the night appears behind the portholes of their mauve, beige, purple or black lips. Their hair surges over the city, revealing and submerging their small mother-of-pearl skulls in order to protect them from becoming the target of "a knife without a blade that lacks a handle." I am referring to the rhetorical aggression against women's lives that permits this aggression: I am referring to the ideological terrorism of femellitude.

Introduction

By
Wolfi Landstreicher

Does anarchism need feminism? If feminism is, indeed, the same as women's liberation, then it most certainly does, if only because, in this case, consistent anarchism would already include feminism. But this equation is open to question. One need only consider Emma Goldman, passionate anarchist proponent of women's liberation who rejected the feminism of her time (though current feminists claim her as one of their own, often to the exclusion of her anarchist perspective), because she considered it incapable of carrying its project forward to *total* liberation. [On the Anarchism and Women's Liberation page found at www.geocities.com/Paris/2159/anrfem.html it is put this way: "Interesting enough Emma Goldman and many of the Spanish women anarchists were quite hostile to being described 'feminists'. To them feminism meant the struggle of middle class women to be equal with middle class men, while to them women's liberation entailed the struggle of men and women for a freer society for all."] Undoubtedly, early feminist theory and practice broke open the doors for questioning the role of women and the nature of gender that is a necessary part of any revolutionary struggle, but already in Emma Goldman's time its first wave had become trapped in the *cul de sac* of rights and lacked any revolutionary vigor. The role it played in the development of Bakunin's arguments that the struggle against the general slavery of this society could only succeed if it specifically dealt with the enslavement of women in the family and in society, in the growth of the largely anarchist 19th century free love

movement (which, unlike the "free love" movement of the 1960's, developed largely as an attempt to fight against patriarchy and the inequality of women as imposed by the family) and in other anarchist explorations of gender relations aimed at ending domination in this sphere of life, is worthy of examination, but with a critical exploration of why revolutionary women like Emma Goldman and many of the anarchist and revolutionary women of Spain felt compelled to reject the "feminist" label in the name of their own liberation.

Of course one should not confuse the "new feminism" (neofeminism as Annie LeBrun calls it) that began to emerge in this country in the 1960's, a few years after it appeared in Europe, with the feminism of Emma's time. If anything, "neo-feminism" is less liberatory, more repressive and more monolithic than that with which Emma had to deal.

It has been and will be pointed out to me that there are many feminisms (a claim that might be more convincing if the monolithic language of universal sisterhood was not thrown about so consistently). The evidence for this is the variety of opinions expressed in feminist writings. A variety of *opinions* indeed. But within the framework of democracy, a far broader range of opinions is expressed. This does not change the fact that the democratic state is a repressive monolith.

Not that there is a feminist *state* (though state feminists are plentiful), but it is necessary to realize that since opinions are separate from lived practice, the existence of many within a movement offers no guarantee against a monolithic practice. Coherence is not a prerequisite for ideological and totalitarian thinking. In fact, often quite the opposite: a babble of voices unites to form a deafening white noise that drowns out real difference.

Furthermore, one does not determine whether a movement is liberating based upon its words, but upon its

dimensionality. Take the Soviet choirs, and nowadays the neo-feminist choirs, where the multiplicity of voices warble the same theme: "I'm not racist, but I wouldn't want my daughter to marry a man."

And here is where my repugnance for neo-feminist discourse finds its reason for being: I will never be made to believe in the biological roots of all these rhetorical scaffoldings, which only appear, each one just like the rest, in order to make people forget that they collapse one after the other into the *ahistorical perspective* of this women's viewpoint, on the pretext of denouncing one or another of the crimes against women. Wouldn't the frenzy to construct, to occupy the silence, relate back to a completely phallocratic fear of the void, or at least reproduce phallic representations of femininity? In the same manner that the traditional woman compulsively furnished the space in her home, compulsively adorned the surface of her body, it seems to me that today the feminine word occupies, adorns, furnishes, overloads the space of discourse with its infinitely repeated echoes, with no goal other than to envelop itself with this space.

Then I suddenly understand the difficulty I have breathing in the constraining limits of this little world that is completely indistinguishable from the putrid worldliness of Leonora Fini, its official painter. Everything I love about women withers away here: the weightless freedom that made Virginia Woolf dream of a secret, marginal, "intangible, anonymous society among women; the strange vegetal whisper that emanates from the meditations of Lotus de Paini... It is useless to continue, this nostalgia is out of place. Besides, I cannot yet bring myself to examine why and how neo-feminism manages to slip history into a woman's sex like a rabbit into a top hat. I rise up to see Paris advancing in the clarity of the dawn. Still twilit women slip between the lawns of young lights. Distant and immediate they move, having no

Certainly it is just and necessary to show that homosexuality is to be found within everyone. To do so, is it indispensable, because one is a man, to implicitly address oneself only to men?
[FHAR, *Rapport contre la normalite,* p.80]

Something that, as we've seen, women in struggle could in no way be reproached for! And we're even happier to state that these Lapalisse ladies, ["Lapalisse ladies" refers to people who state the obvious.] who might just as well complain about musicians loving music, do not, for their part, demonstrate any sexism when they declare that "The penis alternately represents the scepter or the club. Of what interest is all this for women? None." In the end, one notes the biological imperialism this inexpressible broad-mindedness leads to when they conclude this address to their "homosexual brothers" in the following manner: "WHERE IS THE PROLETARIAT? It is the army of women who work at home. It is the Black Continent. It is the eternal Third World: the nation of women". [FHAR, *op.cit., p.* 81]

It is a stupid "women's viewpoint" that, here as elsewhere, does not hesitate to make sacrifices to the phallic competition in order to carry off the top prize for misery.

In these conditions perhaps one will understand that, once again, it is difficult to me to take Simone de Beauvoir seriously when she affirms, without laughing, that: "There is nothing monolithic about feminist thinking". [Simone de Beauvoir, *Les femmes s'entetent,* p.l 1] First, I very much doubt that one can talk about thinking here, when the innumerable contradictions and incoherencies of feminist discourse cancel each other out in order to lead back to a disturbing *mystique of* femininity that, in its pettiness and self-satisfaction, tends to reassure this famous "women's viewpoint" that is founded entirely upon a hatred of what is masculine. Monolithism never excludes formal diversity elsewhere when it serves to cover up its own one-

practice. Has this practice opened and expanded possibilities? Has it broadened horizons and provided the opportunity for individuals to take back their lives? Or has it added to the repressive, debilitating atmosphere that polices and immiserates our existence? The current resurgence of feminism [I am speaking of that resurgence which began in the 1950's and 60's. I recognize that new movements and ideas (particularly those relating to transgender movements) have had some effect on feminism, but since this has usually simply been inserted with little if any serious questioning of the general practice of "neo-feminism", I think that it is an act of self-deception and an avoidance of critique to claim these mainly cosmetic glosses constitute an "third wave" of feminism as some have said.] now has a history of several decades that can be easily examined.

Unless one considers an increasing percentage of woman cops, judges, CEO's and politicians to be liberation, feminism has not opened any possibilities outside of the framework of domination and exploitation. It has only expanded the ways in which women can participate in dominating or being dominated, exploiting or being exploited. And this is not because it has failed, but because its practice, like that of every partial liberation struggle has been aimed precisely at this goal.

But this basically bourgeois, democratic practice is not the totality of feminist practice. It's true nature is indicated even more clearly by the alliances made by the likes of Andrea Dworkin with right-wing fundamentalists with the aim of promoting rigid, puritanical anti-pornography legislation or in Susan Brownmiller's claim that when 50% of all police forces are women, that will constitute a revolutionary achievement. The decades of neo-feminist practice have, in fact, largely centered around promoting laws to protect women from the threats that the feminist ideologues perceive as surrounding women on all sides and

claiming their piece of power in the current order, in other words, demanding protection from the very power structures that they claim are patriarchal and claiming a share of that same power. I would hardly call this project of increasing state power and intrusion into people's personal lives in the name of women's rights a project of *liberation* for anyone.

If anarcha-feminists have avoided such disgusting displays of political assimilationism, it is because they are *anarchists* not because they are feminists. [This is true, because feminism, in itself, is not *a revolutionary* movement. Like all partial liberation struggles, it can and generally does remain in the realm of demands and thus of *rights* - precisely of assimilation. Anarchism, on the other hand, starts from a challenge to the entire social order and, thus, cannot be assimilated. It makes no demands, but rather acts to destroy all domination. At its best, anarcha-feminism would be the specific application of anarchist principles - including the rejection of the methodology of demands and rights - to the liberation of women. But far more often, anarcha-feminists simply apply the methodology of demands and rights in anarchist circles.] Their anarchism constrains them to develop their feminist practice without the mediation of big papa state. But all to often this means that they just turn directly to the males in the anarchist movement to demand that *we* guarantee them the space to speak and to act, once again calling upon those who they claim are their oppressors to liberate them rather than acting to liberate themselves. This sort of practice guarantees the practical continuation of male domination, because in demanding that men grant and guarantee their freedom, they leave the practical definition of that freedom in men's hands. In addition, anarcha-feminists often demand that their male comrades go through a perpetual process of self-examination in order to guarantee that they root out all "sexist" behavior-a concept that comes

[Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n 'en est pas un,* p. 24]

At this rate, one can expect that neo-feminism will shortly wither away when its adepts discover all the raping forks and spoons with which they are still unconsciously feeding themselves in their mouths. In the meantime, the big ideological cleansing goes on full blast, achieving very meager results: the feminine horizon may well have widened, but it nonetheless remains one of passivity, while, black or white, the phallic hero continues to advance to meet his vileness as in former times he met his glory. Nothing has really changed; the lighting has only been altered by reversing the locations of the rays and shadows. And in spite of what some would have us believe, an optical illusion is not sufficient to shatter the mold of human relations.

Furthermore, I can scarcely see how the feminist bureaucrats, who have not yet managed to eliminate the sex collaborators from their ranks and are also very careful not to take responsibility for the coherence of their delirium (unlike TiGrace Atkinson and Valerie Solanas who had the audacity to do so), are going to change the world from a "women's viewpoint"; or rather, I see only too well: whether they refuse or consent to have relations with the enemy-strategic relations, it goes without saying-the invention of their liberty is disconcertingly confused with guilt-tripping what is masculine. And even [male] homosexuals, despite the many forms of repression that they suffer, are reproached for belonging to the masculine sex, as this delusional "Lesbians' Response to Their Homosexual Brothers" demonstrates:

Men,
whose name designates male and the species at the same time,
who ceaselessly reinvent power,
Why must your language perpetually evoke domination and violence?...

merit of the women mentioned (including Leonor Fini and Dorothea Tanning, which says it all) is that they inaugurated a hagiography of the feminine martyr. Which, let us note in passing, scarcely offers any menstrual blood as grist for the mill of feminine specificity since, whether it is a question of Dorothea Tanning's puppet-like "Maternity", or Frida Kahlo's premature birth: "Long ropes project from her navel and join her, like a ball and chain, to a stillborn child, skeleton-like and black"; whether again it is a question of the used tampaxes exhibited by Gina Pane in order to evoke "the painful vagina, which is not only the source from which the child appears, but also of the pleasure-pain of being a woman", or the blood spattered sheets on which Ana Mendieta exhibits, there is no doubt that here it is the artist (and not the observer, as Marcel Duchamp claimed) who makes the picture. And this artist, it should be noted, is always the cruelest masculine specter inscribing the "real or symbolic tortures inflicted on women" on the canvasses, as well as on women's bodies.

This detour into neo-feminist aesthetics at least has the merit of informing us that the feminist universe only whitens in order to better set off the bloody writing of the masculine principle. Red on white, one can see the deception by which neo-feminist discourse is fed appear. With regards to rape, what will be retained is the violence of penetration in order to establish that all penetration is violence perpetrated against feminine autoeroticism. And to get an idea of the level reached by this bloodstreaked casuistry, I will hand the stage to one of the theoreticians of feminine specificity who scarcely worries about nuances when affirming, with the aplomb of scientific objectivity, that

The suspending of this auto-eroticism takes place through violent crime: the brutal spreading apart of these two lips by a raping penis.

to mean anything that offends the sensibilities of a feminist woman. This fundamentally censorious demand can expand to the point where all bawdy humor and playful flirtation comes to be defined as sexist behavior. Dworkin's neo-puritanism is not so far away. Again it is difficult to see where the liberation is in this practice which seems to offer only a new form of dependence to women and perpetual guilt and enervating circumspection for men. And for everyone an impoverishment of relationships.

The apotheosis of this call on men to guarantee women's "freedom" is found in the call, expressed once directly to me, that if we act to create a revolutionary break, we must "take the responsibility" of guaranteeing the safety of women, children and old people during this revolution. Coming from an anarchafeminist, this demand is less condescending -than it is selfdenigrating with its implication that only men participate in revolutionary struggle.

Of course, a small number of feminists have moved beyond such an impoverished practice, but the history of the feminist movement of the last fifty years leads one to wonder whether feminism as such played a significant role in this. The women of Mujeres Creando, an anarcha-feminist group in Bolivia, played a significant part in the struggle of small debtors in Bolivia in 2001 and surely continue to play a significant role in the struggle against domination and exploitation there. As women in a nonwestern country, it is quite possible that their anarcha-feminism is qualitatively different from the Euro-american version known to me and to Annie Lebrun. Pat Califia has also provided a very different way of perceiving liberation than that promoted by most other feminists-but this is because she is a "sexual outlaw"-an individual whose sexual singularity does not fit anyone's attempts to confine and define it-and this moves her on a practical level beyond the limits of feminism. Of course, like all heretics and strong individuals, she is frequently severely

castigated by the orthodoxy of ' feminism. Nonetheless, though they have gone beyond the limits of victimism and censorious political correctitude that marks most current feminism, [The question also arises here of using some of the analyses made by feminists as a tool for one's struggle. Just as among the multitude of voices that make up primitivism or marxism, one may find a few tones useful in the struggle for total liberation, a few tools to use for one's own projects, so too one may find such useful tools in the ideological cacophony of feminism. There is no reason not to use such tools, but one does not, for this reason, become a primitivist or a marxist or a feminist, but rather *an individual* taking up every tool useful in her or his struggle for liberation.] these women choose to identify as feminists.

If, among the chattering that blends to create the ideological white noise of neo-feminism, there are a few (or even many) voices that proclaim the necessity of moving beyond gender, self-identification as victim and political correctitude, the practice of feminism described above indicates that it may not be capable of doing so. Some feminist theorists may write that women are made and not born, that gender is an artificial social category, but this does not prevent them from equating the wealthy bourgeois French maoist-feminist intellectual with the clitorectimized woman of Somalia (who will most likely voluntarily clitorectimize a young girl herself in her later life because that is what her culture demands), uniting them **it** a universal sisterhood, a shared (but not essentialized!) feminine condition. (I will not go into the various class, racial and other social realities that also undermine "universal sisterhood".)

It is in this light that the demand that men make themselves "allies of women"-as if women constitute a single entity with unified desires, needs and aims-must be understood. It is quite true that I am not an "ally of women",

with complete naturalness, from the pens of those who have been given the task of instructing the idle masses. All that I need as an example is one of the diatribes of Benoite Groult, who [...] has been doing neo-feminist entrism in the magazine *Marie Claire:*

> *There is much talk of certain categories, exclusively masculine ones of course: immigrants, the handicapped, even certain poor perverted people who, it is said, are in need of specialized nurses... It is true that their situation must pose certain problems. But these are THEIR problems. They should not be resolved at the expense of* innocent *women* [Annie Lebrun's emphasis] *who are sacrificed to the sexual equilibrium of one group of individuals or another.*
> [*Marie Claire, no.* 295]

Whatever one may think, the innocent readers who read these lines were not sacrificed to Benoite Groult's mental handicap, but to the one that governs neo-feminism. Black leveling becomes white leveling. Today the criminal inevitability that tore apart every representation of the feminist universe has been followed by a fatality of innocence which extends women's demands indefinitely in order to make a weepy imperialist display of them.

When I saw that the women from the GRIF were bringing together accounts, documents and information with the goal of looking at the problem of violence without wanting to ignore its complexity, I was hoping that they would avoid getting stuck in the theoretical ridiculousness of neo-feminist ideology. But I quickly had to sing another when I noticed the reflections of a certain Aline Dallier [There is no specific information on what text the quotes from Dallier come from, though later on page numbers are given for quotes, for this reason I am refraining from noting quotes.] on "the image of violence in women's art". According to her, the principle

I will explain: with rape and its imaginary representations, a notion of *women-space* takes root at the cost of a definitive flattening out of femininity as a danger zone. Therefore, he who approaches is to be excused for every folly: we know that at one time or another, every rapist claims to have been provoked, and that classically this defense system is one of the most satisfying to the extent that, as a result of 2000 years of Christianity, public opinion in general derives the spineless pleasure of finding itself in familiar territory. Progress in this sphere seems to be heading in the worst direction, Since when it became difficult to question that Anne Tonglet and Araceli Castellano had been victims of an indisputable aggression, they were reproached not

...for having been raped, but for being homosexual. We are judged, we are condemned, and some even go so far as to think we're worse than the rapists.
[interview given to *Marie-Claire,* no. 244]

I don't know who to hand the grand prize to for sleaze: the rapists or the employers of these young women, who used arguments like this to deprive them of their jobs following this affair. In both cases woman is no longer even an object with its contours and its effective particularities; she is the indefinable space of the curse of the flesh. It has been the tradition of feminism that has refused this cursed topography, which whitens all of the shadows of virility on the march, due to the single fact that femininity is said to stretch forth as a space which is booby trapped from the outset. This is why I am astonished that neofeminism finds nothing better with which to confront a macho criminality that is very real than the virgin lands of an *innocence on principle.* But this is such a fundamental aspect of neo-feminist ideology that we even see it making its appearance,

just as I am not an "ally of men". In fact, I don't seek *alliance* with anyone, but rather comradeship in struggle. Comradeship can only . occur in freedom on the basis of mutuality. It cannot be based on debt or obligation, or it will cease to be comradeship and will become a relationship of domination, the enslavement of one party to the interests of the other. The relationships I make are never with categories, but with individuals, specific people with whom I share an affinity, a mutuality of aims and desires. Those who think I owe them something, those who charge me with the wrongs of a category which I defy in the name of a category with which they identify, will never be my comrades. But in those who defy all social categories in the name of their individuality, those who rise up against all domination and, therefore, also male domination, those who struggle to break down all limits and open all possibilities rather than demanding more limits on those they fear, I find my comrades, those whose struggle is my own, whether they consider themselves feminist or not. Thus, women like Florence Rey who, with her companion, Audry Maupin, sought to make her life her own in defiance of all laws are my comrades. And also women who, like Annie LeBrun, rebelliously defy the limits of being made a woman, whether in terms of the femininity imposed by the dominant society or in terms of the sisterhood imposed by the feminist priestesshood.

In light of the recognition of this mutual desire to defy all domination-including that of oppositional ideology-and destroy all the categories and institutions that limit the expansion of individuality, in light of this comradeship in struggle against the world of alienation and domination, impoverished passions and relationships and immiserated, deformed sexuality, I choose to reprint this essay by Annie LeBrun exposing the constricting, totalitarian ideological underpinnings of modern feminism. Is feminism the same as

women's liberation? Not if this liberation is the expansion of possibilities for women *as individuals* beyond all the constraints imposed by this society, an expansion that can only occur in the context of the expansion of possibilities for all dominated people, which is to say in the context of our insurgent reappropriation of our lives as our own. And if feminism is not the same as women's liberation, anarchism, in its struggle against all domination, has no need for feminism just for women like Emma Goldman, Florence Rey or Annie LeBrun who refuse to be dominated.

raped, that is, of having been nothing but the body in the crime in the most insignificant sense of the term.

But in order for this rejection to come about, the rigor of their account must prevent the substitution of a new ideology that denounces the aggressor with the aim of exalting the victim for the one that assails the victim in order to excuse or even glorify the aggressor. From their experience of suffering, women know that it serves no purpose; the only thing that it teaches us is to do everything that we can to prevent it. And as much as I consider it necessary for women to break the silence that favors rape, to the same extent I cannot accept that "In light of these accounts rape" appears "to clearly be a terrorist tactic utilized by a few men, but serving to exert the power of all men over all women". [*Cahiers du GRIF*, "Violence", no. 14-15, p.103] I'm very sorry, but to be a woman and to have been raped does not authorize one in any way to use the handy convenience of the principle of collective responsibility to which the totalitarian outlook has always made reference. I may be taking things the wrong way but when, hidden under the garments of pain, the following psycho-sexual law is pronounced: "If all men do not rape women..., all benefit from the fact that some do", I can't prevent myself from thinking of the phrase, "They're all bitches", which encountered a fate with which we are all familiar. And when I see the neo-feminists placing their pawns on the miserable generic chess board in this manner, I get the feeling that the women who really have been raped are condemned to disappear, one by one into the darkness of their suffering thanks to this. Otherwise, why does neo-feminist discourse always end up presenting rape as the implicit model of all masculine behavior, reducing it to its most pathetic negativity, when rape demonstrates an analogous reduction of femininity which unbearably surpasses even the notion of woman-object itself?

and by total I mean 50/50, not less-is a revolutionary goal of the highest importance for the rights of women;

Or, again,

I want to point out here that I am someone who considers a prison term a just and legitimate solution to the problem of criminal activity, the best solution we have today as a civilized punishment and to have a preventive effect against future crimes.

Is it this forest of billy clubs and bars which guarantees the radical newness of the neo-feminist paradise we are promised?

It is a strange "women's viewpoint" which consecrates the break of neo-feminist discourse with the reality lived by specific women, when it is the most somber one. Because if feminist today are calling for justice in the case of rape-for which one cannot blame them without ending up defending a scandalous state of affairs-it is precisely because *in fact* they separate power and maleness, though their discourse nonetheless tries hard to systematically confuse the two. And for us, this is something that can be instructive in relation to the nature and function of today's feminist discourse, which in the specific case of rape, contributes considerably to obscuring the problem. This problem is too serious to think that shutting away rapists can wipe out anything whatsoever of the physical, mental and emotional devastation caused to those who have been raped: "We were so desperate that we even thought of suicide," Araceli Castellano and Anne Tonglet, who were raped in August 1974 while camping be a beach near Marseilles, tell us. First, it is urgent for women to reject the Judeo-Christian curse on the flesh, which up to now has made women silently bear the shame of having been

trellised virgins appearing to remind me that these things are not to be laughed at, I will hasten to return to a subject that is just as important for the women's struggle in another way.

So let us see what sort of light this famous "women's viewpoint" sheds on the problem of rape, something of which women are the direct victims and about which only women who have been raped can bear witness. Here again, it seems to me that this light appears to be flickering, to say the least, in spite of the means deployed to make us believe that this alone can indicate what is good and what is evil.

If it is up to women to establish the criminal reality of rape, which is too often evaluated with extreme complacency not only by the justice system, but by general public opinion as well, is it really the duty of women to deliver rapists to a judicial system which, if they are to be believed, is a guarantor of everything they claim to be fighting against? How can it be forgotten that it is the same justice that condemns women who have abortions, women who perform them, [At the time this was written, abortion was still illegal in France.] and rapists-and condemns them equally when any of them does not have sufficient means or backing available to them to avoid having their crimes taken to court? How can one suddenly have recourse to the repressive legal apparatus of a power that is called phallocratic when rape constitutes the grossest and most miserable manifestation of this same power?

To the very praiseworthy ambition of Italian feminists who wish to make every rape "a trial of the State" a completely different reality responds, if we are to judge from the book *Against Our Wills* by Susan Brownmiller, who is considered the authority on the question. In this book one can read the following sort of feminist declarations:

I am not someone who employs the word revolutionary lightly, but women's total integration into the police forces-

removes all equivocation about the depth of the neo-feminist horizon?

In this respect, most of the exemplary actions that are wholly guided by this "women's viewpoint" leave one with the deepest doubts about the way today's feminists intend to "change the world". Twenty years after Jean-Pierre Duprey, the person who said "Any sign of life would make me laugh", simply went one day and pissed on the Arc de Triomphe, extinguishingintentionally or not, it makes little difference-the deceiving flame of country, nation, war that is nourished in the heart of Paris by the body of an anonymous individual, therefore any individual whatever, Parisian feminists could think of nothing better to do than to go and place a wreath of flowers to the wife of the unknown soldier. Clitoris out front, they went up the Champs Elysees, no doubt to show what ancient Amazons they could be, dreaming already of their breast of wood. I will not attempt to peer into the troubled waters of their real motivations. I will simply ask one question: Before coming up with this humiliating 'reproach to the unappreciative nation, wouldn't it have been more worthwhile-"from a women's viewpoint", it's understood-to first ask oneself whether the sublime wife of the unknown soldier was not one of those rotten women who sent men off to war with flowers in their rifles, or who did nothing to prevent the men they were living with from participating in the collective butchery in one way or another? Too bad, too bad that these feminists did not think of extinguishing the patriotic flame in the way Duprey did, because that would have been an opportunity for taking back possession of their leg-objects in order to make an Arc de Honte-arch of shame-which would not be forgotten; too bad, finally, that they didn't bother to take up a collection for the movement like the brilliant crook who has reaped a fruitful offering in recent years going house-to-house in the name of the wife of the unknown soldier. But since I already imagine the choir of

Gynocracy Song

By
Annie LeBrun

For if I had known Latin when I was 18, I would be emperor. -Arthur Cravan

There are geographical slips which do not forgive: the headquarters of *Des Femmes* [A feminist publishing company-translator's note] bookshop in Paris is located on the rue des Saints-Peres (Street of the Holy Fathers).

A sign of the times, a sign of the climate, little wrinkles cause big ruts. One of the biggest ruts of the present era, which neofeminism is making the effort to dig with an empire builder's frenzy, is the claim of an *absolute* feminine specificity. And to make us bear witness to the existence of an important current, industrious intellectuals are busy widening this rut into which blind-and blinding-misery does not fail to throw itself. From there it should be sufficient to brandish the kaleidoscope of misery, until the bits of painful reality find a place in the comforting clarity of an illusory landscape: on the pretext that masculine infamy chased it away, feminine "naturalness" makes a galloping return, all the more rapid since it is whipped along by a cohort of intrepid Amazons who are short on ideas and long of tooth. A discipline as thankless as it is fruitful, carried out by means of a neo-feminist agitprop that shrinks from nothing to apply make-up to the recurring specificity of the totalitarian discourse it proclaims as the specificity of the feminine word.

To start with, this professional revolutionaries have it easy, so desirable is it to substitute the coherence of the artifice for the incoherence of a miserable life.

Hasn't the holy alliance of misery and femininity lasted too long for women not to be tempted by everything which might seem to be working towards its destruction even from very far away? And this is where the unexpected good fortune of neofeminist activism resides: it is most convenient to oppose the murky realm of a most suspect feminine "naturalness" to the misery of feminine destiny which has been taken for granted, since this realm can be played in an undefined manner in order to outplay any attempt to clarify it. This is where the *gigogne* [*"Gigogne"* refers to objects that fit one inside the other, which seems to me to be the structure of feminist discourse, which always refers back to something that more or less implicitly includes it.] structure that is specific to neo-feminist discourse is derived; it is simply a question of a specifically feminine ruse in the sense that generation after generation of women have had to have recourse to in their slavery: when you believe that I'm here, I'm elsewhere; when you believe that I'm elsewhere, I'm here. Without losing sight of the fact that this technique of systematically slipping away has contributed greatly to lending credibility to the hoax of feminine mystery, I wonder what women hope for from an army of liberators who use it to such an extent that they trap the feminist idea under the glue of this "naturalness", which is, of course, inexpressible. It is no longer a question of a leap, of taking flight, much less of a departure. The women we have loved, sovereign and lost, faint in the fur of their solitude once again.

Claire Demar, Natalie Barney, Virginia Woolf, you are not so dissimilar, since you are equally strangers to those who claim to be your sisters. Once again, the space which you were obliged to conquer in order to invent your lives has been closed off to you. They want to drag you where you would never go. The hour of the little neo-feminist world is stuck at ground level on an organic clock which, in spite of its outrageously visceral material, is built on the same model as

I have a vexatious tendency to dramatize the inevitable excesses of a struggle that is nevertheless legitimate. Except that, when I hear the Italian feminists wishing to "change the world" from a "woman's viewpoint"-and they do not differ from their American or European sisters in this-I get a chill down my spine. And my spine becomes still more sensitive when we are told in the same journal that in Rome on the night of November 27, "ten thousand women" were howling, "The white moon is gleaming on the roof, my sisters. Let us take up our lanterns and our candles and go through the hostile city denouncing the violence which this masculine world has inflicted on us. We are another power. We are the new power that is rising. We will liberate you, o city, we will liberate you, o male who is chained by the exploitation you make us suffer."

I will not go on about the novelty of this weary refrain that is tirelessly shouted from the moment there are liberators who are pining for power. But I would like to know by virtue of what witchcraft this "power that is rising" will become something that will save us, when elsewhere it is endlessly repeated that "men's unhealthy desire for power and violence is at the heart of every problem". [*Les Femmes entetent,* p.209] Perhaps there is a special brigade of neo-feminists who can make recalcitrant subjects understand that there is power and power, because I am unable to understand that there are police and police or the army and the army. While waiting for this explanation which I will never receive, I resign myself to advancing further into the night of neo-feminist obscurantism to discover what is hiding under the unresolved question: If women today can reproach men for having made things function "from a men's viewpoint", how can they claim to liberate "males", as well as themselves, "from a women's viewpoint"? Wouldn't this be something of a theoretical contradiction which, in practice,

At the risk of being taken for an enemy of my gender who must be stamped out, I would point out just the same that certain languages exist in which this linguistic quibbling is impossible due to the simple fact that one has recourse to different words to designate man and human beings.

But it's of little importance; litanies of this sort pollute feminine literature of recent years with such consistency in their stupidity that I will stop at these two examples. In other times, in other places, didn't it seem necessary to everything be swallowed with equal ardor in order to unleash a pack of positive heroes upon all those whose uneasy shadows questioned the fatal purity of a new world? Could it be a question here of the infantile malady of the oppressed who no longer wish to be so? It's possible, but there are infantile maladies that have serious after-effects once the period of growth comes to an end: to begin with, those kinds of psychic infections which curiously transform the oppressed into oppressors. I can understand that women today, after being denied, humiliated, fucked over, raped and dispossessed for too long, have gone in search of a primordial wholeness. But I don't so much understand that they are claiming to find it in a pure and spotless image of femininity that is dishonestly positive because it is absolutely positive. This being said, I am fully aware that I am engaging in an act of sabotage here of which I will, furthermore, not fail to be accused. Undoubtedly, this is what brings us back to the famous priorities of struggle.

Since it sometimes happens, from priority to priority, that one may have the priority of finding oneself in a camp or a psychiatric asylum, I am trembling. Not because the witches are back, as the Italian feminists are pleased to announce, but because under the ready-made thought of this mass witchcraft I see the motion of the shadow of an Inquisition rather than the firefly of revolt illuminating the heaths of the great refusal. Once again, one might believe that

those by means of which, here and there, attempts are still being made to convince us that zero is equivalent to infinity.

But let us judge from the following "reflection" on feminine specificity, a "reflection" in the optical sense of the term, since it compellingly evokes that prison of deforming mirrors in which femininity is in the process of becoming trapped:

"Does something that could be called a 'specificity' of the feminine way of looking at things exist? Yes, in the sense that women look with their own eyes, whereas too often men no longer know how to look with their eyes, and only see the images they are permitted to view on all kinds of 'screens' [Anne Ophir, *Regards feminins, p.237*] ... But even though this man is very conveniently declared blind in order to convince us that women are privileged, for their part, to have eyes in their sockets, the author nonetheless has the kindness to consent to allow him a trace of existence through the misfortune of masculine discourse, which is entirely contained in the following formula: "I yell that I know, therefore I am". [ibid., p.238] But this is still too much, since we learn that this unfortunate man "puts forth words in the same way he does gestures, mechanically, like on an assembly line, - no longer comprehending". [ibid., p. 7] Thus, while men talk and talk and talk, women feel, women live and women see. If I've understood correctly, feminine specificity as a world of sensation, rhythm and silence, is therefore implicitly founded upon refusing not just masculine discourse, but all discourse since it is all masculine.

And this is where neo-feminism bites its clitoris: how would feminine discourse escape the general misery of discourse by being enunciated by women? And it is here that the final link of the totalitarian chain falls into place, slowly strangling life until all that remains of it is a murmur that is easily rhetorically tamed. Besides, one only has to pay

attention to the diverse sampling of orchestrated noise with imperialist goals which the tiniest neo-feminist bibliography furnishes us: here are the *Language Stealers (Voleuses de langue,* Claudine Herrmann), spotless *Talkers (Parleuses,* Marguerite Duras, Xaviere Gautier) who are shouting themselves hoarse *Speaking our Sexualities (Dire nos sexualites,* Xaviere Herrmann); *In Other Words (Autrement dit,* Annie Leclerc, Maria Cardinal), of course, but desperately out of *Breath (Souffles,* Helene Cixous), such is this *Woman 's Word (Parole de Femme,* Annie Leclerc) that is prisoner of its own echoes: *Words ... Turn (Paroles ... elles tournent,* des femmes de Musidora). But if I listen attentively to the redemptive words of these *Messengers (Messageres,* Evelyne Le Garrec); *Silence, We're Shouting (Silence, on crie,* Marie Vaubourg), I have the impression I've heard this tune somewhere before.

Here I expect the spokeswomen for feminine liberation to unfold the infinite fresco of battered, raped, aborted, exploited and circumcised women in order to underline the inappropriateness of my remarks. And in the event that some of them have managed to remain calm-which I doubt from the sound of their war cries-I expect that they will evoke the priorities of the struggle, which render the fundamental objection that I am making irrelevant. But I will not give in merely for this. To begin with, I am far too aware of how these unbearable convulsions, these impenetrable depressions of flesh, these wounds gaping like despair, weave and mold the feminine condition to be willing to put up with anyone making a fresco of them. I hear these cries rotting with obscurantism too often, even at the edges of the silence that looms between men and women, to endorse the birth of a new "cult of rotting flesh" .in a daze. And this is what is being demanded of us.

Just as the piece of raw meat thrown into the "Laissez-les vivre" ("Let Them Live") cradle of organdie [An anti-abortion

"newborns" from the latest shower of feminists telling us history in their manner:

History? That of spilled blood... They were not our acts. We came from the dawn; we came from the beginning, and we were the ones who gave, who nourished, who cared for life and who did not have or were unable to retain any means of preventing life from being destroyed, wasted and bloodied by the barbarous rage of men who, paradoxically, were not snatched from ignorance through knowledge, as if the so-called higher values had become accomplices of savagery.
[Chantal Chawaf, *op.cit.*, p.6]

What can I do? I do not have the bad taste to be moved by this evocation of Salvation Ai any femininity that throws in the towel. But even if I did it would still be difficult for me share in this whiny idiocy when one sees these bleating sheep-who give, who nourish, who care for life from the tips of their enchanted pens-use this immaculate purity as an authority to sully, in the flourish of their existential generosity, everything that is masculine. In order for us to get a picture of the typhoon of stupidity that menaces us, stupefied, I will hand the stage to Christianne Rochefort, whose humor does not appear to have resisted this virus of virginization through femellitude:

We are presently colonized and on the road to decolonization: we have not participated in the enterprise of conquest, violation, rape and massacre of the earth carried out by Man-and it is here that the meaning of this terra, which has long been claimed generic, reveals its reality: it is, in fact, a question of man in the limited sense.
[Christianne Rochefort, in *Regards feminine* by Annie Ophir, p.90]

when I consider the reality that its incredibility serves to erase: neither my body nor those of other women are "caught in language", as the little masterpiece of contorted simplicity entitled *0 Maman, Baisemoi encore (0 Mommy, Kiss Me Again) would* convince us; neither my life nor those of other women "pant" and "suckle" in order to "let the milk flow" or "the writing fly": [Helene Cixous, Avertissement *a Souffles*] ultimately, if "woman does not shut" [*ibid.*], neither does the neo-feminist mouth, as it opens more and more into the gulf of words that, trying to be primordial, are no longer in touch with the historical reality which women, like men, are nonetheless plunged.

I am saying that this gulf is political in the sense that it is scandalously real-like the gulf which was dug between m the militant feminists and those accused in the Bobigny trial [The Bobigny trial refers to the 1972 trial in which women accused of performing abortions pleaded guilty and received relatively light sentences.] when it was collectively preparing the defense. Didn't some argue about the radicalness of the movement, as Gisele Halimi reports in *La Cause de femmes,* when what was at stake was for others was their very concrete liberty, their very concrete lives? There can be no minimizing of this gulf by invoking the eternal divorce between theory and practice. This gulf is inherent in the *maddening purity* that flattens the feminist landscape today. And if one can applaud the dismantling of the mother/whore pair which, with Judeo-Christian dualism being all the rage, has shared the image of women until now, one cannot in any way rejoice in seeing neo-feminism replace it with the witch/martyr couple that may indeed unify femininity, but from the stupefying and antiseptic viewpoint of absolute innocence.

Since these endeavors of frantic virginization are never gratuitous (note the former and future Stalinists in the Western countries), I ask myself questions when I hear these

display-editor] in 1971 by a group of homosexuals (men and women) revealed the barbed-wire armor of that rat's nest through an indelible spot of blood, I am equally astonished that the uproar being made about the question of abortion seems to resound at the expense of information about contraception. Here, I am clearly not talking about the very real struggles for the right to have an abortion which are taking place in France and elsewhere. I am simply asserting that the difficult reality of this fight is obscured by a literature hat is as degrading as it is parasitic in that it is written with the blood of others from the start. Aren't feminist publications too verbose about abortion not to seem too discreet about contraception? Even if the continual representation of crime did have educational virtues, as the militants believe, I would not be able to accept that these lives, which have already been stolen by twenty equally militant centuries of procreation, be stolen again to serve the aims of edification.

The more totalitarian a particular way of thinking aspires to be, the more it seeks spectacular martyrs who can then be used against anyone who doesn't bend to its way of thinking, even if it kills them. Wasn't there a time when the ten thousand executed members of the Party of the same name ["The ten thousand executed members of the Party of the same name" refers to the number of communist members of the resistance who were shot during World War II, whose memory has been ceaselessly evoked by the French Communist Party in all kinds of situations during the years following the war, to the point of the party calling itself "the party of the ten thousand who were shot".] had their deaths stolen away to hide an infinitely greater number of cadavers'? I am going a bit quickly perhaps, but there are ideological ruses that can be spotted quite far away from the places where they acquired their titles of shame.

No, Helene Cixous, you cannot proclaim, in a preface to Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* which is bloated with demagogy, that "we are all hysterics" as long as there are still hysterics shut away in asylums and women writers who are pursuing their careers by occasionally proclaiming that they are hysterical. One does not have the *caddishness*, in the most phallocratic sense of the term, to steal the shadow of the haggard memory of women who have gone mad because they have been dispossessed of themselves.

I want people to understand me clearly: in 1968, the world was enriched by a solidarity in revolt when the only thing that certain people had to gain by declaring themselves "all German Jews" was the anonymity of getting clubbed, whereas the world is impoverished when a university professor is reduced to appropriating the madness of others in order to adorn herself with a new literary makeup. If "They: the phallocratic therapists, men - psychiatrists - ladies' men - family - daddymommylovers chain of substitutes" are really an "Equation of death" [Helene Cixous, in the preface to Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness,* p.7.], as Helene Cixous proclaims perhaps its simply a matter of ceasing to do research except as a way of earning *their* playthings: I am referring to *their* media prizes, *their* university posts, *their* introductions to official expositions, *their* television, along with other rewards of *their* system which Helene Cixous does not seem to particularly scorn. And if, indeed, "men 'exalt' women by lowering them", as this benevolent hysteric judiciously tells us, then one has to come to the conclusion that Helene Cixous has fallen very low.

In light of these obscene antics, I would like you to recall Unica Zurn, and her light solitude "like a white void": by throwing herself out of one of *their* windows, she has opened a breach in the wall of life, leaving the transparent lace of the bewildered questions of childhood floating on a sky which is shot with explanations. " what does the man who was born in

young person who was interviewed by chance: because we were unaware of the reference texts, neither of us knew anything of the clarifications that neo-feminist discourse provides us about our situation in the world. To such an extent that the extremely problematic articulation of our neurosis concerning class struggle becomes child's play when one learns that:

For the entire period of their stay, the bourgeois who didn't make it are on the ladder of assets, aspiring to be bourgeois. The rebels... advocate a collective climb up a collective ladder and an elbow-to-elbow to put an end to the body-to-body and the proliferation of private ladders.
[Michele Causse, *L'encontre,* p.132]

I pick out these pearls not so much to amuse myself by exposing their idiocy-though a little just the same-as to show the extent to which the non-return of the theoretical(?) or lyrical(?) neo-feminist discourse manages to function in a void, which, furthermore, the previously quoted textual tightrope walker does not fail to proudly reveal to us:

My manuscript has one fault: it is difficult and it is addressed only to women. It is also political. All women, then, can read it. ***Even those who will not decode the language will understand my thesis."***
[Michele Causse, Avertissement a *1'Encontre, Catalogue des Editions Des Femmes.* Emphasis added by Annie LeBrun]

Here I understand that if I comprehend nothing about this coded exertion, it doesn't matter; absolute faith that the neofeminist word is well founded is sufficient-this is where the secret of comprehension resides. I have not forgotten that "Holy water can work in a car in a pinch" (Picabia), but this kind of miracle continues to escape me just as much

as idiotically mysterious, maternity just as stupidly triumphant and feminine desire just as derisively painted in makeup. Neo-feminism can flatter itself for having adapted these sad roles, which are inherent in this misery, to the taste, or rather the lack of taste, that characterizes the end of this [the 20th] century. I know that life is always invented in opposition to these roles, which most people customarily accept with frivolous docility or slip into with self-interested flexibility. But I also know the immense emotional disorder of all those women the reality of whose misery and desperation turns them away from the frivolity or cynicism necessary to play this game. Like them, I have the fierce aspiration to situate myself elsewhere. And it is less painful for me to say it since I believe that I have uncovered the same *gap* between the deaf, bursting, convulsive, dreary, starlit, torn-apart-night-that-tears-apart in which every woman finds her life as between my life and the neo-feminist discourse.

To begin with, I suspect that I am not alone in feeling a bit put off when I am asked, for example, "to articulate my neurosis about the class struggle". I thought that I had done away with early childhood and the horror I was plunged into by the destruction of a rubber duckie. However, this phrase, which I heard in a cafe, provoked such dismay in the young recruit to whom the speech was addressed that I thought that I had flashed back 20 years. As with myself and my rubber duck, she struggled to place the rose leg of her neurosis on the desired spot on the plump and evasive body of the class struggle, recognizing nothing of herself and others in the headless, tailless monster that she was credited with having engendered and which, astoundingly, escaped from her hands after a number of stinging ideological elastic snap-backs.

After thinking it over, in retrospect, I have come to understand my fright, which was just as useless as that of the

'99, but wakes up one morning in '66 say? His beautiful "99 has been turned upside down during the course of time, and he himself knows better than anyone what it means. The '66 is ready to throw itself along with him headfirst into eternity". [Unica Zurn, *L'Homme-Jasmin,* p.16] Doesn't the "revolutionary sympathy" between one woman and another, the "active transforming sympathy..., true emotional apprenticeship..., counter-education" [Helene Cixous, *op.cit.,* p.8] which is claimed by Helene Cixous in order to justify turning madness to her advantage seem a little bit useless when one discovers the "immobile presence" around which the world of Unica Zurn is arranged in large panes of glass? "Much later the keys turn inside her, one after another, but she doesn't open. One quickly wearies of this useless box and throws it away. For in years to come, she will bend over the shoulders of men, but will see nothing but the Jasmine-Man. She will remain faithful to her childhood wedding." [Unica Zurn, *op.cit.,* p.14] In the light that slips and dies on days of delicate pearls, Unica Zurn invents "the game of transparent acts". And we find ourselves so distant from her that we have nothing to take away from her dementia and everything to learn, as from those improbable explorations from which the entire jungle of childhood is made. Because we have not lived through *her* madness, it is impossible to boast of *her* rigor, Ariadne's imperceptible string above the void that can only break under the insidious pressure of this "new style", the suspect compositions of which-"a mixture of love, solidarity and 'sisterhood'-Is praised by Helene Cixous.

One also ends up doubting that the verb *to have, "in* its sense of possessing", has really "fallen into disuse" simply thanks to the neo-feminist lovers treated in Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig's book, for whom they make themselves the idiotic spokeswoman.[Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig, *Brouillon pour tin dictionnaire des amantes,* p.30] In order to *be,* or at least to give the impression of being, is it really

necessary for the neo-feminist stars to make use of all the sordidness of intellectual "maternalism", or of a completely rhetorical militant promiscuity? By talking too much about an *"I* which is *us"* (Helene Cixous), these neo-feminists appear especially greedy to possess, among other traits, the exotic tattoo of misery. I will not belabor Marguerite Duras' latest find in this respect. Furthermore, during an exhibition of feminist paintings, she suddenly considered herself to be obliged to exclaim, "My sisters? Yes. My sisters, these rootless Barbarellas deprived of fiction, with vaginal and mute mouths. Yes. My sisters" [Marguerite Duras in *Sorcieres #3*, p.39] before the representations of very hypothetical hookers who have been examined and corrected in order to play their part in the hagiography of femellitude. [*"Femellitude" :* this word does not exist, strictly speaking, but is used by Annie LeBrun in a pejorative sense.] This is neither very touching nor very novel, because if the illumination of neofeminism was necessary in order for Marguerite Duras to discover, with fear and trembling, that hookers are ultimately not essentially different from herself, one finds oneself mourning for the platitudes of humanism where these things go without saying. But furthermore, haven't people delighted in calling these mouths "vaginal and mute" in order to give birth to the worst literature, as one can judge here, for far too long? As for this sisterhood that is claimed right and left, wouldn't it rather be up to those who have been scandalously "deprived of fiction" to make this decision? For now, it very much seems that things will remain on the level. of rhetorical seduction within the sad limits of literary exhibitionism as long as the hookers do not see themselves in Marguerite Duras or her writings rather than the reverse.

I know I am being blasphemous by looking at the world this way. But what can I do? I have yet to be moved by the neofeminist revelation and can make no sense at all of the

So what is this reality? Quite obviously the one that has been made for them by men, and not the one which neo-feminists make for themselves, without protest, from the verbal bloatedness that we all know; but also the one that every woman has consented to, and *consents to* losing, until nothing remains of her life except the very vague outline of dots that is the succession of her children, her husband's and indeed her lovers. Wouldn't it be the time as well to state that masculine power, which is now granted the privilege of blotting out every darkness, is permitted by this consenting to banality rather than inciting women to discover the well of the marvels that they naturally are? Isn't one condemning Sleeping Beauty to an eternal leaden sleep when, while dissuading her from waiting for Prince Charming, one encourages her to rely on the hypnotizing omnipotence of a bewitching neo-feminism? Since it only seeks to promote a new set of roles and, quite clearly, of clitoral medals for its most faithful servants, neo-feminism never speaks of the reality I was referring to above that, in spite of everything, I insist is given to each person to find or lose in the discontinuity of a sensitive life which ceaselessly throws a monkey wrench into the mechanism of roles and livery. One will not be overly surprised that, from primordial femininity passing through suffering femininity to militant femininity, these roles are all revealed to us in an outrageously positive light.

Angel or demon until now, woman today has the good fortune of being only an angel, but an angel that has the distinction of presenting itself as a winged vagina. With regards to feminine reality, I admit that I can hardly distinguish between the vagina with teeth and the vagina with wings. And since they talk of revolution, I could grant that it is a question of a revolution in the costumes that are being worn, but nothing more. Appearing today under a shower of tacky organic ornaments, femininity remains just

quality of the way in which the former looked at the Caledonian forests, and the latter looked at the London nights, contains the entire stake of their revolt.

All of our reasons for living or dying at times depend on the color of the sky: by perceiving and conveying it, certain people expose the vital source of revolt by pushing the ideological artifices which steal it away aside: "Isn't everything connected to everything? Doesn't obstruction of human development and the development of new senses originate in general outlooks." [Louise Michel, *op.cit.*, p.124] Undoubtedly, this is where this "revolutionary dandyism" of which Severine speaks lies: scandalously natural, it resides in the challenge of recognizing the luxury of life in the places where it has not inevitably been debased, in spite of everything. I am obliged to state that this dandyism is cruelly lacking in neofeminists, who are preoccupied with being taken for the scapegoats of feminine misfortune to the point of obsession, less, no doubt, "from the cultivated shabbiness of their old clothes, or the craftily contrived dirtiness of their hands", by which Severine recognized the "jokers of revolution", than through the feverish rubber-stamping of every misery of the feminine condition at any cost, even that of lying. This ruse is not the same, but something worse since the masquerade has been internalized. One might be led to believe that this kind of indecency is a specifically feminine quality, but that would be a mistake, since it's only a question of a handful of bureaucrats.

I can agree that making a stand like this against what seems to foretell a new exploitation of women by women does not resolve the institutionalized exploitation of women by men as such. But I am arguing that current feminist discourse is only postponing the time when women will make themselves free in that it is deceiving them about their reality.

"obscure, confused, mucous maternal language, of the hot flow, of the language of origins, the soft and downy words of which have emerged, like satiny flesh, from the passionate attention that the baby pays quite naturally to the body and the ambience that surround it; words of reassurance spoken to nourish, a language that does not need to demonstrate, prove or represent..., a language that *exists.*" [Chantal Chawaf, *Sorcieres #3*, p.4]

I would point out to the confused reader that it is not the merits of a carpet that are being praised here, but of a language that is revolutionizing the world if one is to believe the loudspeakers of these times. This language may exist, but I will never be able to make contact with it when in the barbarity where I remain I have the misfortune not only to, hear, but to pay attention to the professions of faith and the revelations it conveys: "If a pimp has a woman walking the streets, it is because he would like to walk the streets himself, to possess this knowledge. And if he is violent with her, it is precisely because this knowledge escapes him. And this knowledge is enjoyment". ["Jouissance Pouvoir", *Sorcieres #3*, p.52] Admittedly, we may have thought of that, but this language still has many other surprises in store for us: "Prostitution is the only job from which you can really learn about life. There is an entire part of me that I would never have been able to express if I hadn't gone through being a prostitute. Before prostitution I was like many other women. Too repressed; too reserved. Prostitution helped me to really become myself". ["Un voyage initiatique", *Sorcieres #3*, p.48]

In effect, as we have been warned, this language certainly has no need to demonstrate or prove; otherwise you would have to wonder what obscure reason causes so many feminists to waste their time on battered women or feminine creativity, when, according to what we're told here, all these little problems could be resolved through prostitution. A

question as useless as it is out of place, since in order to understand these "carnal words, knowledge sentence with rays from the heart which illuminate that which remains plunged in unconsciousness-when the words do not spring from the body", [*Chantal Chawaf, ibid.,* p.4] you undoubtedly have to endorse the definition of truth with which Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig have cheerfully chosen to be satisfied: "If an affirmation is repeated twice, the third time it becomes true." For once, it is clear: from the proven technique of ideological clubbing will spring neo-feminist truth.

In all likelihood this is the source of my incurable deafness to the feminine word. All the more so, since in remaining insensitive to this "sonorous, oral well-spring", [*Chantal Chawaf, ibid.,* p.6] there is a reality that hits you in the face: the patron ladies had their poor people, and the leading feminists have their hookers, madwomen and circumcised women. The building up of a treasury of martyrs is directly proportional to the mediocrity of what is being said. After much hesitation, I will still hand the top prize to Bennite Groult who, being on the offensive while slipping away, pushes boldness to the point of wishing to interest the readers of *Marie Claire* in the problems of female circumcision in an issue (January 1977) in which the courage of Granny Carter-off to India for a frantic round of sterilization under the auspices of the Peace Corps-is elsewhere praised. As long as *Marie Claire is* not distributed in Kenya or Ethiopia, one can evaluate the exemplary nature of such a spine-tingling safari in the distant lands of feminine humiliation for what it's worth.

One could retort, a little hastily, that the homosexuals of the FHAR have nothing over the neo-feminists, and that if the latter are hanging out with whiny vulgarity in the ghettoes they've chosen for themselves, the former flatter themselves for having privileged relations with Arabs, counting on the sexual, social and political provocation of such an admission

[Severine, *Pages Rouges,* "Choix de Mortes", p.244, ed. Simonis Empis, 1893]

Again as always, then, long live the hookers, mad women and the women of easy virtue, the traditionally symbolic figures of feminine misery, and all the more symbolic since they are always represented mute in order to be brandished as scarecrows or saintly images according to the fluctuations of ideological necessities. It is henceforth established that the neo-feminist revolution only gives words to women in order to be able better to take them back. And id one makes a strong effort to hold on to them, it is sufficient to strangle them with the sludge that was used to mold the most touching laceworks of pain a while back. O eternal "vaginal and mute mouths" that neo-feminists can make talk or remain silent by applying pressure to women's loins! Militant pressure is not different from parental or social pressure-one always expects women to say "Mommy". But I'll come back to this.

In the meantime, I can also expect to at this point I will be reproached for having referred to Severine here: she will be found guilty of the error of having loved passionately and acknowledging, with regard to the person with whom she shared . her "vagabond old age", that "You have taught me to see, to hear, to meditate..." [Severine, *ibid.,* Avertissement] However, in her flaming hazel eyes, whose joyous insolence lit up the somber sequins of her corsage, I see the "revolutionary dandyism" gleaming which she attributed to Felix Payat, Eugene Sue and Gustave Fleurens, who, in their struggle against the old world, *also* knew how to find "the women beautiful, the flowers exquisite, the wine generous, the music bewitching... "[Severine, *ibid.,* p.76] And though it may displease our professional mourners, here it is a question of the same lyrical necessity that illuminates the revolt of Louise Michel or Flora Tristan *from the inside.* The

feminist coloring. And if the players have changed sex, the stakes of the game have remained the same.

How much longer will we have to witness this depressing spectacle? It is to all those whose despair will not be used up either by shouting a few hateful commands or in the miasma of a smug sisterhood that I address myself, still convinced, in spite of the disconcerting demonstrations of recent years, that "When things are worth fighting for, women are not left behind; the old yeast of revolt which is in the heart of every woman ferments quickly when combat opens the paths wider, where it smells less of rotting flesh and the filth of human stupidity." [Louise Michel, *ibid.,* p.106] It is thanks to all these women, who, because of the depth of their revolt, refuse the discourse of the bureaucrats of neo-feminist sensitivity, that we might possibly be in a position to measure, from the profoundest depths of feminine misery "how much certain bureaucrats have a taste for the heroism [or misery] of others", as Severine noted already long ago. Moreover, a re-reading of the *Pages Rouges (Red Pages)* lets us see that things have scarcely changed, considering that Barbara's "prostitution fantasies", discovered at the propitious moment by the "tribunal" of the *Des Femmes* bookshop, seem to be cut from the same cloth as the account of the Fourmies shooting which aroused the indignation of Jules Valles' young mistress:

In the first rank, and among the dead, it can now be said, there were women of very easy virtue.

"That's it," she fumed. "The-charming-conclusion is self-evident: the misfortune is much less horrible, the catastrophe much less distressing, and the sub prefect less worthy of being jeered at because the victims were not roses! "

in a sickeningly racist France. This may be, but the analogy doesn't work for the simple reason that the men of the FHAR are talking about the ones they love, or with whom they share pleasures, whereas the Amazons of the pen seem to have a preference for feminine misery when it is and remains a pretext for a preface or a deeply felt text.

Let us recall the plight of a former prostitute who worked in a feminist bookshop and had the audacity, in good and due form, to demand a pay slip from them. Let us recall the polemic that followed in the October *22, 1976 Liberation,* in which Catherine Leguay, one of the women who had occupied the shop to protest the woman's firing, invited women to leave "the ghetto of the saintly union, the sacred union of the women's struggle, in the name of which everything can be perpetrated. The worst injustices, the sleaziest acts, the dirtiest tricks, as if the fact of being a woman and a woman in struggle were virtues in themselves." Let us also recall the response of Victoria Therame, the flunky on hand, defending the *Des Femmes* bookshop in the same issue, evidently only to assure that the ink of pen pushers like herself continues to flow: "It's thanks to *Des Femmes* that women (I mean the ones who don't write Harlequin novels) are being published more than ever before at all the publishing houses everywhere; promoting women, women's series, woman, this unknown, woman, a new continent! Women are in position of power at publishing houses thanks to *Des Femmes!* This must be understood. We've understood, as has Barbara [The woman who was fired.], especially when these same women tell us that they scorn the exercise of power and recourse to force as being specifically masculine! Finally, let us recall the irremediable blow that his labor conflict, which was brought before an arbitration board, dealt to the feminist idyll that Victoria Therame, always on hand and ready, does not fail to grasp: "But it's simple: something is developing at *Editions Des*

Femmes that has never existed anywhere else, a mini-society that functions in a different, without any hierarchy and without a structured organization; a tight ship, a group of women working in a different way, freedom in action, a seed of a new world, the little green bud, an opening in the city." Things really must be going on in this "new world" for the "little green bud" to suddenly transform into a club to silence to silence all the women. who are not toeing the line, to discredit all the *"unnatural* enemies", as Victoria Therame, in her naive servility, calls "all the other women's groups". But don't worry, all of this is not really *Des Femmes'* fault, but simply due to a prostitute in whom, furthermore, "prostitution fantasies" had been uncovered, and to whom one had the militant generosity of proposing an analysis [*Le Monde,* May 20, 1977, "Le licenciement de Barbara"] in order to overcome her resistance.

Thus, in their desire to feminize the vocabulary, the neo-feminists have been successful on one point: today they can boast of having their own *Katangaises* [The feminine form of *"Katangais",* which refers to a number of asocial or unclassifiable people and some repeat offenders who were very active in helping the students who occupied the Sorbonne during the events of May 1968, but whom most of the students didn't hesitate to abandon to face the police on their own when the Sorbonne was retaken.]-*Barbara,* Monique Pitton, a LIP worker, Erin Pizzey, a coordinator in a battered women's shelter in London, all three taken to court and charged with libel by the *Des Femmes* bookshop [Sylvie Caster, "Salades", *Charlie-Hehdo,* May 26, 1977] just as it was the shame of May 1968 to have invented the masculine word, and to have so readily relinquished solidarity with those designated by it. After such an affair, together with others just as glorious for the cause of women, I would still like to share the passionate conviction of Louise Michel concerning the women's struggle:

If we wished to govern! Don't worry' We're not stupid enough for that! That would make authority endure. Keep it so that authority' comes to an end more quickly!
[Louise Michel, *Memoires,* ed. F. Roy, Paris 1886, Volume 1, p.107]

Perhaps I should not let myself be so strongly impressed by the heart-rending spectacle of a few women writers who are pining for power when, at the propitious moment, some of them, who are growing old, discover the beauties of a feminism they had scarcely bothered about until then, and when the rest, anxious not to miss their debut in the literary arena, are ostentatiously wearing the colors of the gang that's in fashion. It is because she saw Marie Ferre, Mme. Paulin, Mme. Meurice, Jeanne B., Paule Minck, Maria A., Julie L., Andree Leo ... in real life, at grips with the worst realities, that Louise Michel is so confident in the future. I have no doubt that today women everywhere "are simply taking [their] place in the struggle without asking". [Louise Michel, *ibid.,* p.104] I merely doubt that they would join the ranks of neo-feminists, or would stay there for long if they ended up there by mistake, and I assume they would revolt against the arrogance of a few women who wish to dictate their feelings and enthusiasms with the same jealous authority as the sad swarm of spineless phallocrats evoked by Louise Michel: "smooth talkers, the upper crust, dandies, ultimately scum, young or old, ridiculous, stupefied by a pile of sleazy affairs, whose time is up"; and who, for this reason, to the same extent weigh "the minds of women in their dirty paws, as if they sensed the rising tide of these women who are hungry for knowledge, and who ask only that of the old world: the little it knows." [Louise Michel, *ibid.,* p.106] What a historical irony: when one sees the lying pretension of what is done and written in the name of women, one has to admit that this entire passage dangerously tales on-not a feminine-but a